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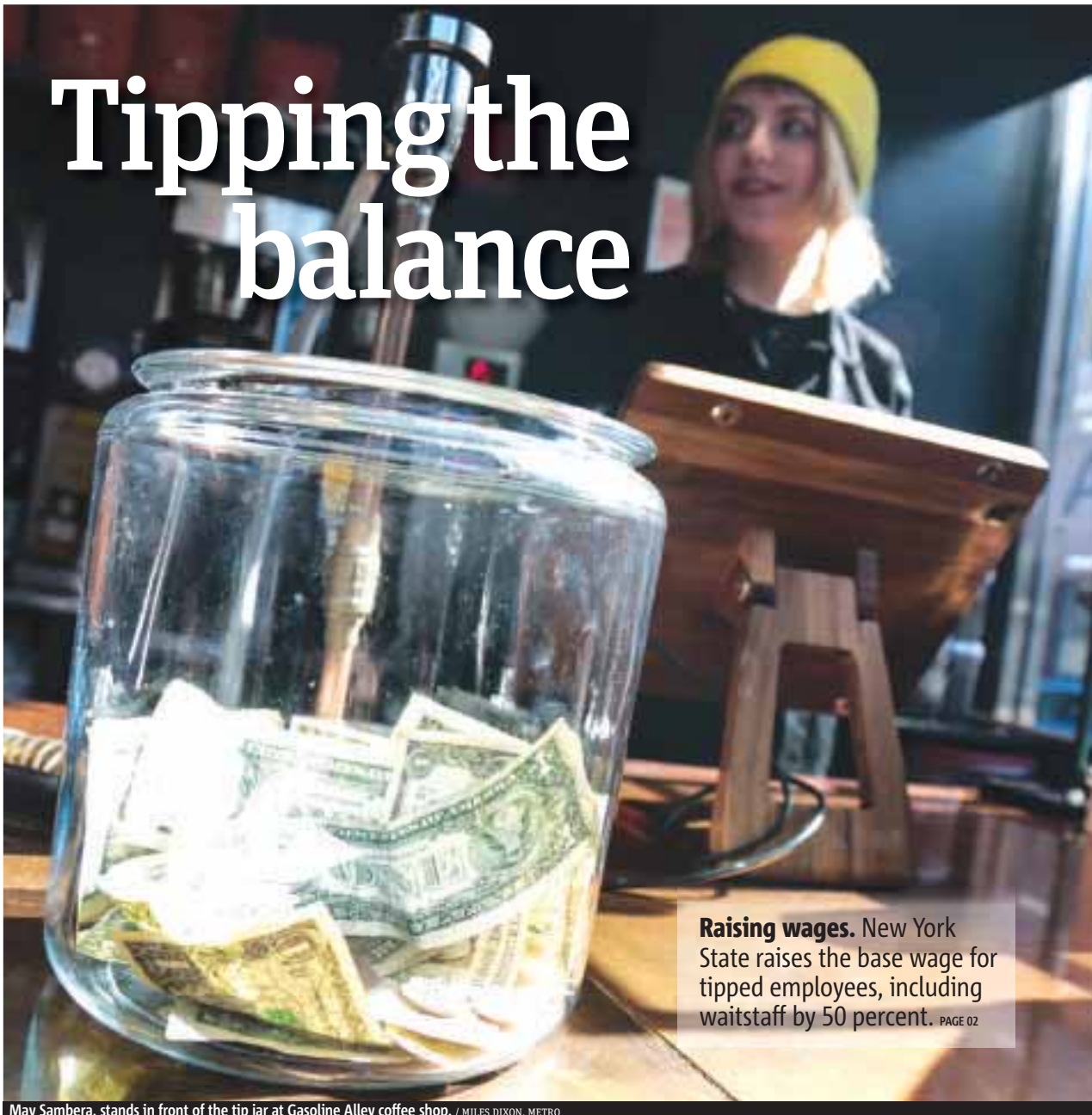
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Tipping the balance



Raising wages. New York State raises the base wage for tipped employees, including waitstaff by 50 percent. PAGE 02

May Sambera, stands in front of the tip jar at Gasoline Alley coffee shop. / MILES DIXON, METRO

The wait, and wait, for an NYC ID card

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Try these trendy foods at your table

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Dyer: For now, A-Rod is in good standing

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NEWS

Top 3

The best of Metro.us

1 'Photo: Transgender man poses nude, recreates famous Adam Levine snap'

2 'The 25 highest ranked companies for internships (according to the interns)'

3 'Eric Garner's daughter, Al Sharpton rebuke latest James O'Keefe video'



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At year's end, wait wage min is \$7.50



Barista May Sambera, 23, of Bed-Stuy by the tip jar at Gasoline Alley coffee shop in Manhattan. / MILES DIXON, METRO

Living wage.

Servers and other tipped employees will make \$7.50 an hour.

Restaurant workers and other tipped-wage employees in New York State have something to look forward to on New Year's Eve — a raise, and being the highest-paid tipped employees in the U.S.

Starting Dec. 31, tipped employees will receive a base pay of \$7.50 an hour, up from the \$5 an hour that servers currently make.

The increase was approved by the State Department of Labor. Other recommendations from Commissioner Mario Musolino include uniform tip amounts for all tipped employees — who make \$4.90, \$5 and \$5.65 depending on their position. The tipped wage was last increased in 2011.

By the numbers

\$5

Current minimum hourly wage for tipped workers

\$7.50

New wage on Dec. 31

\$8.75

New York State minimum wage for non-tipped workers

\$11.50

Cuomo's minimum wage target for NYC

229K

Number of restaurant workers in New York State

Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who made the announcement at the Hotel and Motel Trades Council on Tuesday morning, said now that

the economy and business are doing better, employees need to share in the rebound.

Cuomo also called on state legislators to increase the tipped minimum wage for New York City by an extra dollar to \$8.50. Cuomo said the "concept of minimum wage" means workers can "live with dignity" and provide for their families.

Haitem Weslati, who owns Taszo Espresso Bar in Washington Heights, said the increase won't immediately affect business, because his employees start at \$8.50 an hour.

But, the next round of wage increases would be a "tremendous burden."

"If everybody gets \$9.50, I'm going to have to half my staff," Weslati said. He currently employs about 10 people.

"Some of my employees are getting really good pay, and a good tip. If the minimum wage increases to more than \$10, that's \$17 or \$18 with a tip. That's quite a lot for stand-

ing at the register, with no skills whatsoever, to punch in what's," Weslati said.

"Most of the hourly money is eaten up by taxes," said Zac Dunn, a server at David Burke Kitchen in SoHo.

Dunn said while the increase could be a big help to bussers and other workers, servers who have the potential to make hundreds of dollars in tips a night won't care much about the hourly increase.

"It's like gambling, some days are really good, some days are not so good," Dunn said.

"It's not that significant," said a 10-year veteran bartender working Tuesday afternoon at Toby's Public House in Little Italy, who said her first name was Candace. "Your check is pretty much nothing. That's not much of an increase, but it's a good attempt."



WENDY JOAN BIDDLECOMBE
Wendy.Biddlecombe@metro.us

Business case

Wage hike may harm small business

"In New York City servers often earn significantly more than minimum wage when accounting for their tips, that's why

they are saying this \$2.50 increase won't have a tremendous impact on their take-home pay," Andrew Rigie, executive director of New York City Hospitality Alliance, told Metro.

"However, for the restaurant owner, the \$2.50 increase will have

serious financial implications on their business, in many cases adding hundreds of thousands of dollars a year in increased costs," Rigie said. "Unfortunately, a lot of small business owners don't have this kind of money."

Quoted



"Sounds good. That might affect people who are making very little tips. But if you're at a busy bar, that shouldn't even affect you. ... Maybe I get fired and work at a sh—y bar and that actually affects me, who knows."

Cameron Stiles, 27, Williamsburg, bartender at Cafe Select



"We make more than that [minimum wage]. ... Tips are a huge part of what we do really well. You can make \$20 more or less depending on how much you're trying."

Xander Knight, 25, Bushwick, barista at Gasoline Alley



"It makes a small difference, but life is expensive. Sometimes people don't give you enough tip, especially at a tourist place. Local people give you 18-20 percent, depends on the service, but people sometimes from out of the country give you 10 percent, or maybe nothing."

Carlos Garcia, 42, Bronx, server at Mulberry Street Bar

Quoted

"If you work full-time ... you cannot raise a family, you can't pay for rent and food and insurance and health care on \$18,000 in the city of New York."

Gov. Cuomo

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Dive bars

Winnie's joins list of dying dives

Chinatown's cash-only Winnie's Bar and Restaurant, on 104 Bayard Street, is expected to close at the end of March after 23 years at its spot across from Columbus Park and behind Manhattan's Criminal Court building.

Management did not respond to Metro's questions about why the bar was closing.

Known for its laserdisc-fueled, dollar-a-song karaoke and the infamously formidable \$9 Hawaiian Punch with an unverified number of liquors, Winnie's has long been a haven for city workers, college students, Chinatown residents and

regulars.

The loss of Winnie's is the latest blow to downtown karaoke spots. Its shared stage in front of monitors facing the row of barstools and torn black leather booths was one of the handful old-school joints left in the area.

Karaoke haunt Second on Second closed in January 2013. **METRO**



Winnie's Bar and Restaurant is closing. / MILES DIXON, METRO

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Reporter: Where's my %&!! city ID?

IDNYC woes.

Weeks after applying for photo ID card, Metro reporter waits.



Thousands of New Yorkers stood in line on Jan.12 to get one of the new municipal photo ID cards. I was one of them.

I waited two and a half hours, filled out the paperwork and, with March a few days away, figured I'd have it in hand by now. I don't.

By the end of February, 24,000 IDNYC cards are supposed to either be in the mail or in people's hands. No city agency will confirm if my application has been rejected or stalled, or what I need to do to fix the holdup.

Nor is it clear how many other New Yorkers may be in the same spot. If the 24,000 cards released by Mayor Bill de Blasio's office are accurate, as few as 480 IDNYC applications may have been either rejected or remain in limbo.

No community organizations or elected officials involved with the card's launch have heard of application problems.

City officials would say only that the IDNYC program has a 98 percent success rate and had no exact numbers on many applications were rejected or why. According to IDNYC procedures, I was to be mailed a letter within two weeks of the day I applied, if there was a problem. I never re-

ceived a note.

I called 311 and after 10 minutes told my complaint would go to the Human Resources Administration, the city agency responsible for processing the applications. One week later, I've heard nothing.

The demand for the photo ID caught the de Blasio administration off guard, and an online booking system that was then set up crashed hours after its launch.

Maibe Ponet, a spokeswoman for the mayor, said those who think their applications were denied in error can apply for a secondary review.

Using the IDNYC website, which has a drop-down option for a denied application and second submission, the earliest available appointment at the Manhattan Business Center is mid-August. The HRA office on Water Street has appointments available in late March.

And so I wait.

Share your stories with Metro about waiting, getting or being rejected for one of New York City's new municipal ID cards by contacting Chester Soria.



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A panel discussion will follow, "Medical Coverage of Concussion in Youth Sports: Ideal vs Reality."

Date: Thursday, February 26, 5 – 7pm. Panel begins at 6pm.

Location: NYU Langone Medical Center.
550 First Avenue. Farkas Auditorium.

Panelists:

Arthur Caplan, PhD (Moderator). *Director of the Division of Medical Ethics, NYU Langone Medical Center.*

Bill Barr, PhD. *Director of Neuropsychology, Department of Neurology, NYU Langone Medical Center.*

Dennis Cardone, DO. *Chief Medical Officer, Public School Athletic League; Co-Director, Concussion Center, NYU Langone Medical Center.*

Marianna Engle, PhD. *Sports Psychologist.*

Brian Hainline, MD. *Chief Medical Officer, NCAA.*

Stephen Levin. *NYC Council Member—District 33, Brooklyn.*

Latanya Wilkinson. *General Manager, Bronx Knights Youth Football and Cheerleading League.*

This lecture is free and open to the public, but you must register at tinyurl.com/examiningconcussion



MADE FOR NEW YORK.

Bratton tells of cops' slavery role

Race relations.

Commissioner Bill Bratton says police are part of "worst parts" of black history.

New York City's top cop told a mostly black audience in Queens that police played a part in some of the darkest moments in black history.

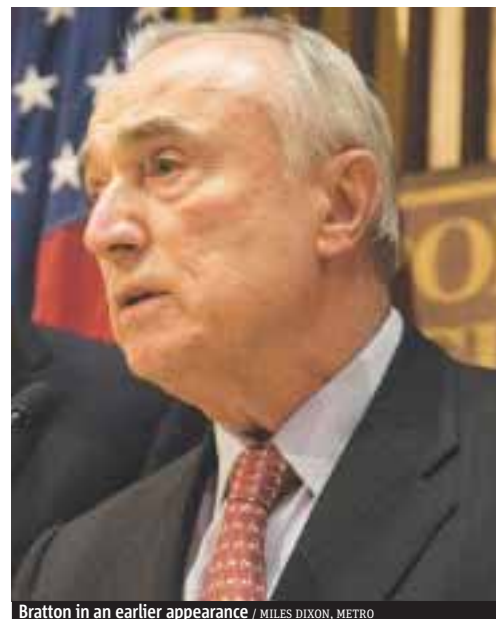
"The best parts of American history would have been impossible without the police. Many of the worst parts of black history would have been impossible without police," Police Commissioner Bill Bratton said Tuesday.

"Slavery, our country's original sin, sat on a foundation codified by laws enforced by police — by slave-catchers," Bratton told the crowd at the Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral of New York for a Black History Month event.

Bratton recalled the beginnings of an unbalanced relationship between police and black Americans when Dutch settler Peter Stuyvesant used slave labor to help build New Amsterdam after he created a police force.

"Since then, the stories of police and black citizens have been intertwined again and again," Bratton told the audience in the basement of the Jamaica church.

Bratton denied that the NYPD had any institu-



Bratton in an earlier appearance / MILES DIXON, METRO

Quoted

"Public safety means public safety for everyone, but we must do it in a way that bridges the divide. We all need to work together — all of us." Bratton

tionalized policies against communities of color, but admitted that its relationship with communities hardest hit by crime need to improve.

Priscilla Gonzalez of the Communities United for Police Reform coalition hailed Bratton's willingness to speak frankly, but said that wasn't enough.

"Unless he takes action to end the abusive 'Broken Windows' and other

unequal policing that only targets certain communities with aggression and enforcement, and holds officers accountable when they brutalize and unjustly kill in communities of color, he too will be judged poorly by history," Gonzalez said in a statement.



CHESTER SORIA
@chestersoria
chester.soria@metro.us

Garner. Video claims to show family pitted against Sharpton

An undercover video released late Monday by a conservative website pitted Eric Garner's daughter against long-time police gadfly Rev. Al Sharpton.

Taped during a protest at Staten Island's St. George Ferry in January, an unidentified woman tied to conservative videographer James O'Keefe approached Garner's daughter Erica Snipes to



ask about Sharpton's organization, the National Action Network. "So, what, you think Al Sharpton is kind of like a crook in a sense?" the woman asked Snipes. "He's about this ..." Snipes said as she rubbed

her fingers together. "He's about his money with you," the woman said.

In an interview with the New York Post, Snipes denied what she said in the video.

Sharpton told the Post that O'Keefe's video took advantage of Snipes.

"They're splicing and dicing stuff together. It was a distortion," he said. **METRO**

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St. Pat's Day

Kerry Kennedy to lead LGBT parade

The one-gay-group-only Manhattan St. Patrick's Day Parade has Cardinal Timothy Dolan leading it.

Now, the inclusive Queens St. Pat's for All Parade has Kerry Kennedy.

Kennedy, the ex-wife of Gov. Andrew Cuomo and a daughter of assassinated presidential candidate Bobby Kennedy, will join actor Brian F. O'Byrne as co-grand marshal, the center said Tuesday.

Kerry Kennedy heads the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights.

Kennedy said she hopes people will join the Queens parade last year.

JOHN A. OSWALD

Suicide. Cherry CEO kills self in drug bust

There was a lot more going on than making delicious preserved cherries.

After investigators found a little more than expected — pot, a secret room and wads of cash — inside the Brooklyn factory that makes Dell's Maraschino Cherries, the owner killed himself.

"Take care of my kids," Arthur Mondella, 57, shouted out to his sister soon after authorities started asking questions.

Then he locked himself inside a bathroom with a gun and ended his life.

Now officials want to know: Was Dell's a front for a drug and money laundering operation?

CBS2 said the Brooklyn DA's office and state and local environmental officials were looking for evidence of illegal dumping of chemicals used to make Dell's popular jarred cherries into city sewers. They became suspicious when they got a whiff of pot, found it, and hundreds of thousands of



A Dell's truck / GOOGLE MAPS

dollars in cash.

"It appears there was another activity going on, that's for sure," an official told the Daily News. "I don't think you kill yourself over a bag of weed. There has to be more to it."

Neighbors said they thought Dell's was a legit family business — the company is 67 years old and was reporting a resurgence in sales.

"It doesn't make sense that it would be a front. ... They've been around for a long time," Joe Morrine, owner of Recycled Brooklyn, told CBS. JOHN A. OSWALD

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Five things you need to know

California commuter train, truck collide, 51 injured

A Los Angeles-bound commuter train slammed into a tractor trailer stopped on the tracks in Oxnard, California, during the morning rush hour on Tuesday, injuring 51 people, several critically, authorities said.

The truck driver fled on foot following the crash and was taken into custody several miles away, Oxnard City Fire Department spokesman

Joe Garces said. Garces said it was not yet clear if the driver would face charges.

The fiery collision just before 6 a.m. in Ventura County, northwest of Los Angeles, overturned three double-decker Metrolink rail cars. Two others derailed but remained upright.

Authorities said the train, which had been traveling at 79 miles per hour, had used an emergency braking system before hitting the truck.

REUTERS



A firefighter hoses down hot spots after the accident. /GETTY IMAGES

US won't file charges against Zimmerman

The U.S. Justice Department said on Tuesday it will not file civil rights charges against George Zimmerman, a Florida neighborhood watch volunteer who fatally shot unarmed black teenager Trayvon Martin in 2012.



The department said it had not found sufficient evidence that Zimmerman intentionally violated the civil rights of Martin, 17.

The announcement comes as the Justice Department also investigates Darren Wilson, a police officer who shot and killed unarmed black teenager Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri.

REUTERS



Facebook counts 2 million active advertisers

Facebook said on Tuesday that its active advertisers rose to 2 million, a 33 percent increase from the 1.5 million it had in July 2014.

The vast majority of the advertisers, defined as those that have placed an ad on the social media platform in the last 30 days, represent small- and medium-size business owners.

Facebook also launched a mobile app for advertisers to use to manage their campaigns. REUTERS

60 cyberthreat groups linked to nation-states

The FBI is aware of 60 different cyberthreat groups linked to nation-states, a senior bureau official said on Tuesday.

Joseph Demarest, head of the FBI's cyber crime division, also said the bureau learned within a month of Sony Pictures' first report of a cyberattack that North Korea was behind it.

The FBI and State Department also announced a \$3 million reward for information leading to arrest of Evgeniy Bogachev, who is charged in the U.S. with running a computer attack network called GameOver Zeus that allegedly stole more than \$100 million from online bank accounts. REUTERS

Conservatives urge Boehner to hold firm on immigration

Conservative Republicans urged House of Representatives Speaker John Boehner not to capitulate in a fight with Democrats over President Barack Obama's immigration policy that threatens a partial Homeland Security shutdown.

The conservative lawmakers, led by Representative Jeff Duncan, circulated a letter to Boehner and other House leaders telling them to hold the line in opposing Obama's executive actions shielding millions of undocumented immigrants from deportation, a Duncan aide said on Tuesday.

REUTERS



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Obama vetoes pipeline bill

Keystone XL. Obama has played down their ability to create jobs and raised environment concerns.



Demonstrator / GETTY IMAGES

Quoted

"Through this bill, Congress attempts to circumvent long-standing and proven processes for determining whether or not building and operating a cross-border pipeline serves the national interest."

Obama wrote in his veto message

the bill hours after it was sent to the White House. Republicans passed the bill to increase pressure on Obama to approve the pipeline, a move the president said would bypass a State Department process that will determine whether the project is in the national interest.

Republicans, who support the project because of its job-creation potential, made passing a bill a top priority after gaining control of the Senate and strengthening their majority in the House of Representatives in fall elections.

The bill passed by 270-152 in the House earlier this month and cleared the Senate in January. Despite their majority in the Senate, Republicans are four votes short of being able to override Obama's veto.

REUTERS

President Barack Obama on Tuesday swiftly delivered on his vow to veto a Republican bill approving the Keystone XL oil pipeline from Canada, leaving the long-debated project in limbo for another indefinite period.

The Senate received Obama's veto message and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell immediately countered by announcing the Republican-led chamber would attempt to overturn the veto by March 3. Obama rejected

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Monitor reports. Islamic State in Syria abducts at least 90 Christians

Islamic State militants have abducted at least 90 people from Assyrian Christian villages in northeastern Syria, a monitoring group tracking violence in Syria said on Tuesday.

The British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said they carried out dawn raids on rural villages inhabited by the ancient Christian

minority west of Hasaka, a city mainly held by the Kurds.

Syrian Kurdish militia launched two offensives against the militants in northeast Syria on Sunday, helped by U.S.-led air strikes and Iraqi peshmerga.

This part of Syria borders territory controlled by Islamic State in Iraq, where it committed atrocities

last year against the Yazidi religious minority.

Islamic State did not confirm the kidnappings. Supporters posted photos online of the group's fighters in camouflage attire looking at maps and firing machine guns. The website said the photos were from Tel Tamr, a town near where the Observatory said the abductions occurred. **REUTERS**

Border clash

Chadian soldiers kill 207 Boko Haram fighters in Nigeria

Soldiers from Chad deployed as part of operations against Boko Haram killed 207 militants in fighting on Tuesday near a Nigerian town close to the border with Cameroon, Chad's

army announced in a statement.

One Chadian soldier was killed and another nine were wounded in the clashes near Garambu, the scene of regular attacks by the Nigerian Islamist group in recent months. There was no immediate independent verification of the Chadian army's announcement. **REUTERS**



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2

CULTURE



Twitter feed

Today, Conan O'Brien has some bad news for you, Kelly Osbourne ain't having it, Whitney Cummings is turning to technology, Victoria Beckham knows how to party, and Bette Midler has some fiscal policy suggestions.

@ConanOBrien: That unreleased book by Dr. Seuss they just discovered proves that Fifty Shades of Grey was completely plagiarized.

@KellyOsbourne: I WILL NOT BE DRAGED INTO THIS! The situation is being rectified like ADULTS by both parties. I hope you can leave it to them & do the same!

@WhitneyCummings: Anyone know of an app that will change my nature?

@victoriabeckham: I'm very excited about my new leopard flats!!!

@BetteMidler: The #Koch brothers and @GOP spending \$1.5 billion on the next election. It'd be cheaper to start a Republican colony in space at this point.

Zendaya has perfect comeback to 'Fashion Police' hair comments



OK, two things: One, Disney star Zendaya Coleman looks amazing. And two, "Fashion Police" pundit Giuliana Rancic is not a very good comedian. While critiquing looks from the Oscars red carpet, Rancic had this to say

about Coleman's long, luxurious dreadlocks: "This hair, to me, overwhelms her. I feel like she smells like patchouli oil. Or weed! Yeah, maybe weed?" Yikes.

Well, naturally, Coleman wasn't too pleased, and she registered her displeasure in a lengthy and well-reasoned rebuttal on Twitter. "There is a fine line between what is funny and disrespectful. Someone said something about my hair at the Oscars that left me in awe," Coleman

wrote. "To say that an 18-year-old young woman with locs must smell of patchouli oil or 'weed' is not only a large stereotype but outrageously offensive." She then went on to point out numerous other notable people who don dreadlocks. Rancic, for her part, tweeted that she was totally not referencing race but instead was making fun of bohemians. But man, what did bohemians ever do to her?



ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

Viewers not pleased with Bobby Brown's BET Awards appearance

Bobby Brown popped up on the broadcast of "The BET Honors" Monday night, which seemed a little strange to some viewers watching at home — you know, since his daughter is currently in the hospital fighting for her life and all. A few even took to Twitter to admonish Brown for getting his priorities mixed up, posting complaints



like "Bobby Brown, get [your] damn ass back to the hospital." Here's the thing, though: The awards show — which also featured a surprisingly eloquent and entertaining speech on racism from Kanye West — actually took place on Jan. 24, a full week before Bobbi Kristina was hospitalized. So everybody just ease off, OK?

THE WORD

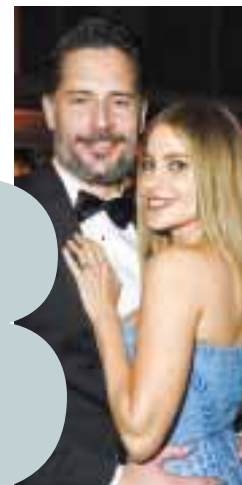
Ned Ehrbar takes on the world of gossip.

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'Magic Mike' sequel messing with Sofia Vergara's wedding plans

Maybe the upcoming "Magic Mike" sequel, "Magic Mike XXL," isn't purely a source of goodness and happiness after all, because it's really mucking up Sofia Vergara's plans to tie the knot with Joe Manganiello. "We wanted to get married this summer, but Joe will be busy working and promoting 'Magic Mike 2,'" she tells Page Six. "We want to get married at a time when we can get away and make time for a honeymoon, so the wedding will probably be later this year." So, you know, your summer is now free. Enjoy!



Kate Middleton could grace the Vogue September issue

As is common knowledge, the September issue of Vogue is a very big deal. Possibly the biggest deal in the fashion bible's year. So it's probably not that surprising that Anna Wintour has set her sights on Kate Middleton for the cover this year. "In the digital age, there is even more pressure to deliver huge sales numbers. Anna knows landing Kate for the September issue would be a huge coup, especially since Prince William's wife has never done a magazine feature for a U.S. publication," a source tells Radar Online. "Anna has been trying for the last two years to get Kate to agree, and she's always refused. But this time, Anna has stepped up the campaign and is now enlisting her numerous high-powered connections." Stay tuned.



Daily video



ADI SHANKAR, YOUTUBE

Whoa, whoa, Power Rangers

We live in an age of gritty reboots, so this seemed kind of inevitable. Director Joseph Kahn ("Torque," "Detention") brings the goofy, kid-friendly "Mighty Morphin Power Rangers" into that age in a dark, action-filled

but thoroughly tongue-in-cheek 14-minute short called "Power/Rangers" starring Katee Sackhoff and James Van Der Beek because sure, why not? Even the theme tune gets a dirty dubstep revamp. But you know, as gritty and realistic as you make it, and as bloody as it can get, the uniforms still look pretty silly.



Which sitcom crew would you hang out with?

If you can't hang out with the friends of "Friends," there are still plenty of options. / GETTY IMAGES

With the success of "Friends," networks have been trying to capitalize on the entertainment value of a bunch of witty people hanging out together ever since. Some didn't last too long, but others have thrived. The only problem is, how do you decide which is the best one for you? We've designed this quiz to help you figure out which crew you should be hanging out with every week. **LISA WEIDENFELD**

Who do you like hanging out with?

- a. My BFF
- b. My boyfriend and our respective friends
- c. My roommates
- d. A group of people who share my interests

When I date

- a. Who said anything about dating? Stop trying to pin me down.
- b. My relationship is very stable, but my friends are too dysfunctional to be in one.
- c. I might date a roommate and regret it.
- d. Date? I've been in love with the girl next door for a while now.

I would describe my friends as

- a. The most beautiful, wonderful people I know.
- b. Funny, but they're no Mother Teresa.
- c. 30-somethings still trying to figure life out.
- d. Huge nerds. Just huge.

My ideal night out is

- a. Aiming for something huge! It doesn't matter if it doesn't work out perfectly, though.
- b. Trying to get into a trendy new restaurant or having a competition with my friends.
- c. Hanging out at the bar where a few of my friends work.
- d. One word: gaming.

In 10 years, I'll be

- a. Same as now: Rockin' it and living my best life.
- b. I might have kids, unless I'm still thinking about whether or not I want kids.
- c. Running a local school, but probably still living with friends.
- d. Teaching at a university.

In your job, you

- a. Just pass the time until 5 p.m.
- b. Work hard, but not everyone in my circle does.
- c. I've changed careers a few times, but I think I've got it figured out this time.
- d. Do something complicated and technical.

How's your living situation?

- a. A work in progress.
- b. I have my own place, and it's nice.
- c. I live with all my friends, just like on "Friends."
- d. I'm trying to transition from living with friends to living with a partner.

Dine out, or cook for yourself?

- a. I can make eggs, if someone else helps.
- b. I wish I could cook, but I can't.
- c. I love cooking for friends.
- d. This is why takeout was invented.

Mostly A answers:



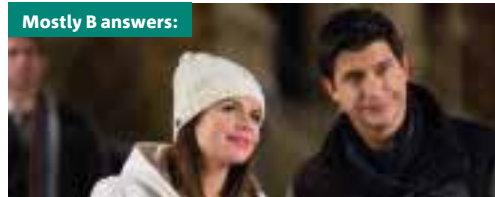
LANE SAVAGE

'Broad City'

You want to hang with the gals of "Broad City." You may not be setting the world on fire profes-

sionally, but that doesn't matter as long as you've got your best friend with you. You two are on top of the world, no matter where you are.

Mostly B answers:



NBCUNIVERSAL MEDIA, LLC

'Marry Me'

You want to hang with the misfits of "Marry Me." You and your friends have known each other for a

while, and that's part of what makes hanging out so fun. You can generally get up to some trouble with them, even though you should know better.

Mostly C answers:



RAY MICKSHAW/FOX

'New Girl'

You want to hang out in the loft on "New Girl." You're still figuring things out, but that's fine,

because your friends will support you no matter what. You can always count on them to cheer you up with a fun drinking game.

Mostly D answers:



WB

'The Big Bang Theory'

You want to nerd it up on "The Big Bang Theory." You and your friends

may not know the latest trends, but you always have fun anyway. You know plenty of sci-fi trivia, and you don't care who knows it.



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Matthew Perry de-Chandlers on 'The Odd Couple'

Comedy. The 'Friends' alum is back in front of a live studio audience, and he feels right at home.

Matthew Perry knows that, given his history on "Friends," everyone is expecting him to play the persnickety Felix Unger on the new version of "The Odd Couple," but he swears he's better suited for his role as the slovenly Oscar Madison. (Thomas Lennon steps into the Felix role.) But hey, maybe you don't need much convincing since the debut episode was the

most-watched new-series premiere this season, with 13.6 million viewers. Just in case, though, he's got compelling reasons for giving the reboot a shot.

Because he's a die-hard fan of the original — and then some. "I was such a big fan of the movie that I know the movie by heart, and I loved the TV show as well, but mostly the movie is what really drove me to want to play Oscar. I co-wrote the pilot, and it was difficult to not just put every line from the movie in the script. And one of the biggest laughs in our first episode is a line directly from the movie. I say, 'You leave little notes for me: We're out of cornflakes, FU. We're out of

socks, FU. It took me two days to figure out that FU was Felix Unger.' That line is in the pilot."

Because why mess with a classic formula? "It's been 30 or 40 years since the show has been on, and it's such a fun character to play, and the dynamic of two guys who have to live together who drive each other crazy is just a perfect sitcom dynamic. And playing Oscar Madison is a dream come true. We've modernized the show so it's more modern-day and dealing with relationships and two guys in their 40s trying to date and being single out there. But the core of the show remains the same, which is two guys who are very,



Catch "The Odd Couple" Thursdays at 8:30 p.m. on CBS. / SONJA FLEMMING, CBS

Because he really is a slob

"If I didn't have people who help clean my house, it would be a disaster."

different living together and driving each other crazy."

Because he's actually not that celebrated an actor. "If I say [playing the role is] easy then I won't win any awards. People think I have won awards, but I haven't won a thing."

Because it's OK to wonder why Matt LeBlanc isn't in it. "We've already done that — and Matt LeBlanc would be an Oscar, too, and I'm playing Oscar. People, when they heard I was doing 'The Odd Couple,' they thought I would play Felix, I think, because Chandler was more of a Felix-type character. I think, when

you are on a show for as long as I was, people do have a certain expectation, and it's your job to go away from that. This character of Oscar is very different than Chandler."

Because it's about time Matthew Perry got a live studio audience. "The show we're doing though, it's like those great comedies in the '80s and '90s. It's a sort of a throwback to that genre. It's just a straight sitcom that is funny. I tried for the last 10 years to do something different and do a drama and then do a one-camera comedy, then I realized the sitcom lifestyle and having an audience is just so much fun. I missed it. We are doing just a classic kind of comedy thing. It's not groundbreaking."



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Three reservations to make during NYC Restaurant Week

I love when Restaurant Week comes around. From five-star classics to casual neighborhood gems, restaurants offer \$25 lunches and \$38 three-course dinners. It's one of my favorite ways to try new restaurants. The schedule varies depending on the restaurant, so read the fine print on nycgo.com. (The event continues through March 6.) Check out these places that will fill your belly without emptying your wallet.

Abboccato

136 W. 56th St. Located near Carnegie Hall and New York City Center, this is a good choice for an affordable option if you're seeing a show. The Restaurant Week menu includes my favorite,

the tagliatelle Bolognese, and pan-seared salmon with saffron broth. Happy hour is from 3-5 p.m. Monday through Saturday and includes half-price appetizers, wines, cocktails and \$5 beers.

Ammos Estiatorio

52 Vanderbilt Hall. If you're coming through Grand Central, give this Greek eatery a whirl. The menu offers seven or eight choices per course and includes a grilled fish of the day. I recommend the keftedes ground sirloin meatballs. Take advantage of the \$5 glass of wine special to complete your meal. They

do specials like no corkage fees on Mondays and have live Greek music on weekends.

Park Avenue Winter

360 Park Ave. S. This spot completely changes its décor and menu every season. It is truly an amazing feat. Definitely try the roasted butternut squash soup while it's still around — just perfect for our chilly weather. For dessert, popcorn ice cream is definitely something new. You'll feel like a king with this five-star meal at dive bar prices. Most entrees are around \$30, so this is a real treat.



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MONICA DINATALE

Monica DiNatale is a bargains expert, food host and author of "365 Guide New York City," a treasure trove of restaurant deals and bar specials in NYC, available in paperback and e-book.



The Weekly Yelp. Chicken wings

Football season might be over, but that doesn't mean wing consumption has to end.

Croxley Ales

28 Ave. B, Alphabet City

Great wings, great selection of beer, what more could you ask for? I grew up in Buffalo, so I had actual Buffalo wings from the original Duffs and Anchor Bar growing up. As a Buffalonian I give the wings there a thumbs up.

ERIC K.



Turntable Mad for Chicken

314 Fifth Ave., Koreatown

The wings have the perfect amount of crunch and are loaded with flavor. It was so good that I came back for three days in a row, just for the wings.

MIRACLE A.



Manny's on Second

1770 Second Ave., Yorkville

Wings are great and prices

are very reasonable. I love the TV setup: They have

so many. They also have about 25-30 beers on tap.

LESLIE B.



International Wings Factory

1762 First Ave., Yorkville

In addition to the usual BBQ sauce for your wings, this place has exotic flavors such as Spicy Thai with Basil or even



International Wings Factory just introduced brownie bites.

FACEBOOK

Vietnamese Chili Mango. My favorite sauce was the Mexy Q. Imagine a delicious, rich BBQ sauce with a nice Mexican chili kick to it.

STEPHANIE Q.

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Rules for cohabitation



Teamwork

When renovating

"Communication, and having a plan in place, is key," stresses O'Leary, who says a renovation can really bring out the worst in a relationship. "So before the renovation project begins, it is important to set expectations like who's in charge of what. And also have a clear expectation around the schedule," she says.



Have a conversation about your dream home before moving in together. / ALL PHOTOS ISTOCK

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Tips. Moving in with your significant other? Here's how to avoid the drama.

Are you and your significant other taking the plunge and moving in together? Before you start plotting where to hide his vinyl collection, read ahead. Interior designer Christa O'Leary, who just happens to also be a marriage and family therapist, offers these tips for stress-free cohabitation.

Clear communication

To blend two different lifestyles together with the least amount of friction, O'Leary recommends clearly communicating needs and making compromises before unpacking boxes.

"You should have a good understanding of how you like to keep your place but also how your partner does," O'Leary explains. "If your partner

is a messy person that leaves his underwear on the floor and you're the person who needs to have a very organized environment, it's going to cause issues in your relationship."

Her solution is to be clear about what you want. "Talk about your needs," O'Leary says, "[like] quiet space before going to bed, very organized space, etc. Communication is key."

Get on the same design page

Before buying that shabby chic sofa or obnoxiously large flat-screen, discuss your style with your significant other. Create a folder or Pinterest board with images of interiors you like. Then, go over your design vision, needs and wants with each other says the expert. "It helps to get a sense of what is going to work for both people because it's really important to make sure that when couples are moving in together or are design-

Women don't make all the design decisions

"Men are much more into designing than they have ever been before," says O'Leary. "And it's just really important for a couple to understand that there should be a balance between masculine and feminine energy to support both people."



ing a space together, that they both really love the space," she explains. "Our environments nurture and support, so you don't want a situation where it supports one person and not the other."

JOANNE REINARD
@metronewyork
letters@metro.us

Unplug in the bedroom

"I highly recommend that people don't have a TV in the bedroom because the bedroom is a sanctuary for

communication and intimacy," O'Leary says. "And if you have things such as a TV or computers or iPhones, that is a distraction away from a couple being able to connect."



Picking flowers



The Philadelphia Flower Show attracts 260,000 visitors every year.
R. KENNEDY FOR VISIT PHILADELPHIA

Bouquet. A florist from the biggest indoor flower show in the world shares her tips.

Robin Heller's display for the weeklong Philadelphia Flower Show, touted as the world's largest and oldest indoor flower show, includes more rats than you might imagine.

The theme for this year's show, starting Saturday, is Celebrate the Movies. Heller's Langhorne, Pennsylvania, shop Flowers By David, which she owns with her husband, David, is participating for the 19th time. Their display conjures "Ratatouille" with flowers woven into scenes of sewers, a kitchen, a restaurant, an 11-foot-tall lit-up Eiffel Tower and plenty of plush rodents.



RACHEL VIGODA
@rachelatmetro
rachel.vigoda@metro.us

Expert tips

Want to brighten up a dreary winter day with colorful blooms? Here are three things to keep in mind at the florist.

- **Buy local:** “Always buy flowers from a Real Local Florist,” says Heller (referring to a florist organization). “They have access to the freshest, widest variety and can suggest flowers that

Tulips

What's in season

"Some things — like peonies — you'll get a better value on in May and June," Heller says. "But if you want them now, we can get them."

On the snowy East Coast, Heller's shop is filled with sunflowers, roses and lilies from Ecuador, protea from California, and mini amaryllis from Canada.

But if you prefer to stick with season-appropriate (and less expensive) choices, Heller says go for tulips: "Tulips are in full flush. This is tulip season."



ROBIN & DAVID
PROVIDED

might suit the occasion."

- **Don't stick with the same old:** "Never be afraid to try something new — it might become your new favorite!" she says.
- **Black is not chic when it comes to flora:** "Avoid any flowers that look brown or shriveled," Heller warns. "Foliage should not be discolored, brown or black."

Priciest

\$59M

1 Central Park South
#PH2009

The most expensive property to come onto the market this week is a condo in Central Park South, marketed by Brown Harris Stevens. This four-bedroom, 4 1/2-bath triplex condo spans three floors of The Plaza. The unit features



a 32-foot terrace and expansive park views, a state of the art kitchen with a wine cellar, private

elevator access and access to all of The Plaza's amenities.

Cheapest

\$292K

339 E. 92nd St. #2A
The least expensive property this week is a co-op in Yorkville, marketed by Town Residential. This

sunny studio unit is on the second floor of a pre-war pet-friendly walk-up. There is laundry in the building and pied-a-terre is allowed.

StreetEasy.com is a New York based real estate information portal that aggregates the most comprehensive set of sale and rental listings along with other useful info



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One to watch. Designer Charles Harbison



A look at the Harbison Fall 2015 presentation at New York Fashion Week. / CONNOR LAMB

"Normal through a modernist lens," says Charles Harbison of his Fall 2015 collection, which he debuted at the Standard Hotel during New York Fashion Week.

But there's something extraordinary about this young designer's approach to normal: his swifty color-blocked skirts inspired by painter Brice Marden, elegant pullovers and cocoon coats cut from gray neoprene jersey, fluid trousers that look as effortless as sweats.

The presentation, too, had a sunniness and bonhomie too rare in fashion (there were even kids there, on a school field trip, invited by Harbison himself). When asked about his vision, the designer cites his muse and collaborator, supermodel Beverly Johnson. "Her ease and elegance. I wanted that in my clothes." Mission accomplished. **RL**



NYFW. Was there really change during the New York show cycle? We investigate.

This Fashion Week seemed to be more diverse than usual. It started with Chromat and Kanye West for Adidas, both labels showing their wares on a wide range of ethnicities, races and body types. Then there were the disabled models at FTL Moda — including New York Fashion Week's first amputee — a model with Down syndrome at Carrie Hammer and middle-aged women and young trans people at the avant-garde Eckhaus Latta. Articles heralded a sea change in the Fashion Week landscape. Yet, despite a handful of young designers shaking things up, the New York runways are still overwhelmingly white.

"It's still very much the same as previous seasons," says Yomi Abiola, a model and founder of Stand Up For Fashion, which promotes diversity and social responsibility in the fashion industry. "Sure, there are one or two new faces,

but if we could really call [the runways] diverse, they would look a lot different."

Indeed, of the thousands of looks walking down the 104 major runway shows archived by Style.com (not including small presentations or more niche showcases like VFiles), only about 20 percent of them were worn by non-white models, which has been static since 2008.

The problem isn't just with designers, says Abiola, but can be attributed to the lack of diversity in every level of the industry, from casting directors to editors to artistic directors. "There needs to be a cultural shift that takes place in the industry," she says. "The runways are a reflection of what goes on internally."

And while the increasing number of non-white faces in the front row — as well as the importance of social media, with modeling agencies scouting Instagram for personalities rather than a uniform look — can make a difference eventually, it's clear that when it comes to diversity, New York Fashion Week still has a way to go.

"A handful of more diverse shows is not a full shift. It's not a renewal of thinking," says Abiola. "These are superficial strides made to avoid addressing something that's a lot deeper."

RAQUEL LANERI
@MetroNewYork
letters@metro.us



Models walk the Rag and Bone runway during New York Fashion Week. / GETTY IMAGES

Quoted

"There needs to be a cultural shift that takes place in the industry,"

Yomi Abiola, model and founder of Stand Up For Fashion

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LOCATION: A draft copy of the Agreement may be reviewed or obtained at no cost, commencing February 16, 2015 through March 6, 2015, between the hours of 10am and 4pm, excluding weekends and holidays at the NYC Department of Transportation, located at the NYC Department of Transportation, Office of Franchises, Concessions and Consents, 55 Water Street, 9th Floor, NY, NY 10041.

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Peppers punch up sweet and savory dishes – and your health, too. / ISTOCK

The food world is much like the fashion world — what's en vogue is constantly changing, and there's a new flavor of the month every, well, month. Don't get caught with an unfashionable plate. Instead, fill it up with these four popular picks.



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Kale sprouts

This offspring of kale and Brussels sprouts contains all the nutrients found in both of its super-food parents, including bone-building vitamin K and immunity-boosting vitamin C. Plus, there are so many tasty ways to enjoy them, whether you grill, saute, roast or eat them raw. Kale sprouts are man-made, but the non-GMO veggie was created through natural cross-hybridization.

Hot foods

Hot sauce took the food world by storm last year, and it's only getting hotter. You'll find spicy peppers, seasonings and sauces in everything from popcorn to ice cream! I love this trend because it's a great way to kick up the flavor without adding extra fat, calories, sugar and/or salt to recipes. Plus, the heat has been shown to kick up metabolism and dampen appetite. Easy ways to spice things up: Add sriracha to mac and cheese, sprinkle cayenne

Joy's Healthy Bite

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Find NBC's Today Show wellness expert on Twitter and Instagram (@joybauer), and check out her new, delicious snack line at NourishSnacks.com



in tomato soup, or add a few dashes of hot sauce into your scrambled eggs or morning omelets.

Kaniwa

Move over quinoa, there's a new grain in town. Kaniwa (ka-ny-wa), a pseudo-grain, offers many of the same nutrient perks (it's high in protein, fiber and iron, and is also gluten-free) and similar

flavor as quinoa, but it's easier to use. That's because it's smaller in size and doesn't contain quinoa's saponins, a soap-like compound you need to rinse off before eating. You can find it online or in health food stores and use it much like you would quinoa: mixed into a grain salad or added to a green salad. You can also enjoy leftovers the next morning, just as you would a bowl of oatmeal.



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Versatile



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If you've relegated this versatile veggie to steamed side dish, boy, are you missing out! It has the ability to take on so many flavors — from creamy to crunchy and nutty to sweet — and different shapes, too, from cauliflower pizza crust to cauliflower mashed "potatoes"! With only five grams of carbs and an impressive three grams of fiber, it's easy to see why this has become a popular low-calorie stand-in for fattening comfort foods.

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Barney Stinson taught us many things over the course of "How I Met Your Mother," from the necessity of a good suit to making an entrance. But, according to no less an authority than a Harvard professor, his wisest piece of advice is his philosophy on optimism: "When I get sad, I stop being sad and be awesome instead."

Tal Ben-Shahar, author of "Choose the Life You Want: The Mindful Way to Happiness," teaches one of the most popular classes in the university's history, Positive Psychology. He defines happiness as "the overall experience of pleasure and meaning."

The key (as Barney also demonstrated over the show's nine seasons) is that happiness isn't something that happens to you — it's a product of your actions and mindset. Ben-Shahar shared his seven lessons to live by for a happier life.

1 Give yourself permission to be human. When we accept emotions such as fear, sadness or anxiety as natural, we are more likely to overcome them. Rejecting our emotions,



Barney's philosophy

"When I get sad, I stop being sad and be awesome instead."

We all learned so much from Barney Stinson (Neil Patrick Harris). / GETTY IMAGES

positive or negative, leads to frustration and unhappiness.

2 Happiness lies at the intersection of pleasure and meaning. The things you do, whether at work or at home, should be both personally significant and enjoyable. "For example, if I find my work meaningful but not pleasurable, I will not be happy doing it and will ultimately burn out," he explains. "If I find what I do pleasurable but it has little meaning for me, I will quickly lose interest."

3 Happiness is mostly dependent on our state of mind. Barring extreme difficulties, our level of wellbeing is determined by what we

choose to focus on and by our interpretation of external events. Try the classic glass half empty or half full question with your daily life to find a new perspective.

4 Simplify! We are trying to squeeze more and more activities into less and less time. Quantity influences quality, and we compromise on our happiness by trying to do too much.

5 Remember the mind-body connection. What we do — or don't do — with our bodies influences our mind. Regular exercise, being outdoors, getting enough sleep and healthy eating habits lead to both physical and mental health.

6 Show appreciation. We too often anticipate big moments, taking the small pleasures in our daily lives for granted. Stop waiting for major events and savor the moments of everyday joy that usually slip by.

7 Reconnect with your support network. The No. 1 predictor of happiness is the time we spend with people we care about and who care about us. Make a call, send an email, text a random photo or suggest getting together for lunch — you might be surprised who's been thinking of you, too.

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Horoscope

Pisces | Feb. 19-March 20
Find a quiet corner and get your work done without entering into a dispute. Your attention to detail will ensure that finish.

Aries | March 21-April 20
Your honest, open manner and true concern for others make you a trusted confidant. Do something special for someone who has been there for you always.

Taurus | April 21-May 21
Consider the motives of someone who wants you to loan cash. A foolhardy joint financial venture will cause serious setbacks.

Gemini | May 22-June 20
You'll have to work hard to get things going. Dwelling on emotional issues will lead to depression.

Cancer | June 21-July 22
Don't get drawn into the rumor mill, and avoid repeating negative or uncomplimentary comments. Gossip will not help you make gains.

Leo | July 23-Aug. 22
Step into the limelight with confidence. Your suggestions will have a powerful impact on those around you, and you will be able to gain valuable support.

Virgo | Aug. 23-Sept. 22
Deception is apparent. Someone will try to undermine your credibility. Be prepared to fight for what is rightfully yours.

Libra | Sept. 23-Oct. 22
You are thirsty for knowledge. Attend informal events or seminars that will give you insight into different cultures.

Scorpio | Oct. 23-Nov. 21
You will be asked to help with someone's financial matters. You will gain confidence knowing that you are doing something nice for someone.

Sagittarius | Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Partnerships look promising. Show what you can bring to the table and find out how far you can go, based on the sum total of your contributions.

Capricorn | Dec. 22-Jan. 20
The more you do to help those in need, the more recognition and satisfaction you will receive.

Aquarius | Jan. 21-Feb. 18
Get out and have a good time with a friend or lover. Lively activities will provide a welcome diversion from everyday pressures and tension. **EUGENIA LAST**

Sudoku: Easy and hard

			1		2	3	9	
3			6		9	1		
6		9						2
8	3	7					5	
				2				
	9					8	6	4
7						9		5
		2	5		7			3
	6	5	2		8			

				4		2	6	
	7			1		5	9	3
								4
			2		5	9	4	7
	4						8	
9	5	2	4		7			
8								
4	9	1		6			3	
3	2		9					

How to play
Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

Letters to the editor

Fast food could be instrument to fight superbugs

McDonald's could be a catalyst for change in the fight to save antibiotics. For decades, antibiotics have been fed to food animals on a daily basis in order to accelerate growth and prevent disease, even when they are not sick. The Centers for Disease Control says that this practice has contributed to the creation of antibiotic-resistant bacteria known as superbugs, which infect two million Americans each year. McDonald's is one of many restaurants that serve meat raised with antibiotics, but it is

also one of the largest, providing food for one percent of the global population each day. If they switched to meat raised without antibiotics, it would be the equivalent of banning antibiotics in meat production in a small country.

The company could lead the way for meat producers and other food giants to start thinking about changing their practices too. In turn, those notorious golden arches could be an agent of positive change, and their public image could be changed for good.

MARIE-SOPHIE IREDALE

letters@metro.us

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Use your smartphone to find today's crossword answers! Download and open the Blippar app on your smartphone and hold the screen over the puzzle.



Crossword

Across

- 1 "Be quiet!"
- 6 Friday prayer
- 10 Not all
- 14 Rigid
- 15 Jackrabbit
- 16 Sheik colleague
- 17 Hoosier Poet
- 18 Aloud
- 19 Go wild about
- 20 A mean Amin
- 21 They're self-propelled (var.)
- 24 Many a watchdog (2 wds.)
- 26 Perches
- 27 Come-ons
- 28 Zorba portrayer
- 30 Mr. Haggard
- 33 Fast sleds
- 34 Riviera summer
- 37 Invoice stamp
- 38 Touchdowns
- 39 Funny -- Lebowitz
- 40 Warm greeting
- 41 Bothersome
- 42 Injured at Pamplona
- 43 Beatrice's admirer
- 44 Promissory note
- 45 Untamed
- 48 Walks the beat
- 52 Old saloon amenity (2 wds.)
- 55 Legume
- 56 -- facto

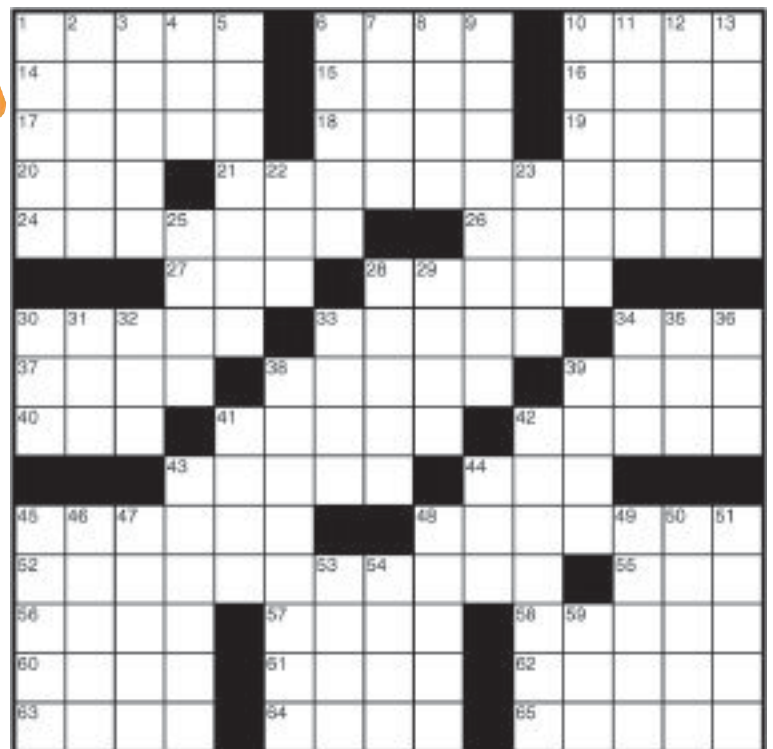
Down

- 1 Bacon unit
- 2 Fictional orphan
- 3 Totally dark
- 4 Compass dir.
- 5 Beatles tune (2 wds.)
- 6 " -- Stop The Rain"
- 7 Countess's spouse
- 8 Laugh loudly
- 9 Steeples
- 10 Individual
- 11 Ranis' servants
- 12 Bolt for a girder
- 13 Curly lock
- 22 Loop trains
- 23 Na+ and Cl-
- 25 Like worn tires
- 28 Tremble
- 29 Hostile, as a crowd
- 30 Radar-gun info
- 31 Perfume label word
- 32 18-wheeler
- 33 Took a beating
- 34 Slip up

- 35 -- kwon do
- 36 Conclusion
- 38 Lavish
- 39 Trey topper
- 41 Flyleaf
- 42 Climbed the fence (2 wds.)
- 43 The very beginning (2 wds.)
- 44 Oddjob's creator
- 45 Malice
- 46 Omega opposite
- 47 Flower holders
- 48 Joyous outburst
- 49 Winfrey of TV
- 50 Pay to use
- 51 Witch-hunt locale
- 53 Eggplant color
- 54 Cuba, to Castro
- 59 Fury



Yesterday's answer



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NBA power rankings | by James Toscano

No. 1



Warriors (43-10)

Three huge road games in Washington, Cleveland and Toronto will test this team. The hope is that Steph Curry, who missed his first game of the season with a sore right ankle, can play in them.

No. 2



Hawks (44-12)

A 25-point loss to the second place Raptors knocks Atlanta from the top spot. Perhaps it was a kick in the butt after the All-Star break.

No. 3



Grizzlies (41-14)

Grit. Grind. Griz. If they keep playing defense the way they have been, they're going to crush March and April.

No. 4



Blazers (36-19)

Portland needed to bulk up its bench and did so by trading for Arron Afflalo at the deadline. Also of note, LaMarcus Aldridge has a thumb injury.

No. 5



Rockets (38-18)

The "James Harden for MVP" calls are becoming louder. Just ask Ricky Rubio, who may need his ankles iced after Harden's Monday crossover.

No. 6



Raptors (37-19)

Sometimes the biggest risk is not taking one at all. The Raptors didn't budge at the trade deadline.

No. 7



Cavaliers (35-22)

They've gone 16-2 over their last 18 games. Yeah, I'd say they've figured it out. And adding Kendrick Perkins gives them some size down low.

No. 8



Mavericks (38-20)

Nice get by the Mavs in Amar'e Stoudemire, who will provide a big boost off the bench. He can absolutely help on a title-contending team.

No. 9



Clippers (37-20)

The Clippers are actually scoring more points per game since Blake Griffin went down with a staph infection in his elbow.

No. 10



Bulls (36-21)

Jimmy Butler is playing through a thumb injury and Taj Gibson is playing through a hand injury. The Bulls might be the toughest team in the East.

No. 11



Spurs (34-22)

Man, just 81 points in a loss to the Jazz Monday? That isn't really the Spurs we've all come to know. They're looking like a seven or eight seed.

No. 12



Thunder (31-25)

The Thunder have won six in a row and now officially hold the eighth seed. But what about Kevin Durant's foot?

No. 13



Suns (29-28)

Trading away Goran Dragic and Isaiah Thomas is one way to shake things up. It's also going to make things more difficult for a fringe playoff team.

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IGNORE YOUR INSTINCTS ON THE ACTIONS OF A-ROD

Let's not call him 'A-Laud' quite yet, but for Alex Rodriguez, so far so good in his first steps as he integrates back into life with the New York Yankees.

Fans may still call him 'A-Rod,' and the critics and the cynics and all the heroes in Cooperstown will likely still refer to him as 'A-Roid,' but Rodriguez needs to be given credit for how he is handling his return to baseball. After a year-long suspension for use of performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs), Rodriguez has said all the right things and has handled himself the right way.

And yet old habits kick in, and we continue to jeer him.

On Monday, Rodriguez showed up to spring training with his new/old teammates, a year removed from the last time he played baseball in pinstripes. He was three days early, leading to an outrage from the media that he was still playing by his own rules. But in arriving early, Rodriguez limited the circus-like affair surrounding his return to the team. And in doing so, he spared his teammates a bit of grief. For the first time in his career, Rodriguez was thinking about someone other than himself and his big, old massive sense of self-worth.

There's still plenty to despise about Rodriguez, the poster boy for an



It's extremely early, but Alex Rodriguez is saying and doing all the right things so far in 2015. / GETTY IMAGES

Opinion

KRISTIAN DYER

@KRISTIANRDYER



era of baseball where the only things bigger than his paycheck were his steroid-infused forearms. But Rodriguez has done right by his team and his teammates. He took one for the team on Monday, facing the media so that the rest of the locker room

wouldn't face the crush of couple days later.

And he answered the questions, not dodging any, but instead, being diligent in his responses. He didn't make excuses, even as he got beamed by question after question so that, come Wednesday,

the rest of the team could focus on a return to the postseason.

He is a victim of his own largess, his own un-likeability. There's no denying that Rodriguez has been a selfish player throughout his career, but perhaps, finally, he has started acting like a man. And still, the first instinct here is to criticize 'A-Rod' for being selfish again?

Why?

Truth be told, simply because he's Alex Rodriguez, the man who one time opted out of his contract before a World Series game. And here we are now, watching something unfold in

Rodriguez's career that should be lauded and not scorned. Perhaps it is his coming of age, his maturation not just as one of the greatest infielders in the history of the game but as a man and, dare we say, a role model.

Built into all of us is a healthy disdain for Rodriguez and all the wrong things he embodies. But on Monday morning in Tampa, Rodriguez — for the first time in his career — stepped up to the plate and did the right thing not just by himself but by his teammates.

It was finally a reason to stand up and cheer for Rodriguez. 'A-Laud,' at least for one day.

NFL



Giants release Kiwanuka

Mathias Kiwanuka was one of the main reasons why the Giants were able to capture a pair of Lombardi Trophies in the past seven years, but it appears that his days in New York are over.

The Giants released the linebacker/defensive end Tuesday in a cost-cutting move that saved the team \$4.825 million in cap space. The 31-year-old registered 464 tackles and 38.5 sacks, the ninth most in Giants franchise history, during his time in New York.

"Mathias has a warrior mentality," Giants GM Jerry Reese said in a statement. "He has been the ultimate team player for this franchise and was a true pro from day one." **MATT BURKE**

NHL

Isles re-up with Leddy

The Islanders and young defenseman Nick Leddy agreed on a seven-year, \$38.5 million contract extension Tuesday. The 23-year-old has 25 points this season. **MATT BURKE**

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Mexican Bar & Grill

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